3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11



596 centripetal pull of the *yir* in the economic sphere that the habit of co-operation and mutual help between the women of the household goes deeper as a rule than their inclination to think of their own *dugət* first. Thus there is a great deal of voluntary mutual aid between the women of the household. The things a woman owns she guards jealously; but she will often lend gladly to another woman of the household on the basis of the true reciprocity that prevails in family affairs. A woman who has prepared a new supply of shea butter, for instance, usually gives some to each of the other women of the household, knowing that some day she will receive gifts of a similar kind from them.

596 854 ●855 It is in the children of a family that the balance between *dug* and *yir* is most precisely embodied. They represent both the differentiation of *dug* from *dug* and the synthesis of all the *dugət* in the *yir*, in their most significant aspects. Thus, all the children of a man are formally the children of all his wives, and this might include the children of his brothers too. The women of a family, and especially co-wives, usually help one another a great deal in caring for one another's children. This commences with child-birth. As we have seen, the care of a parturient woman falls largely on her co-wives and other women of the same family. A new-born child is not given the breast at once by its mother but by another nursing mother; and a nursing co-wife would be the first person to be called upon. Later, the infant will often be left in the care of a co-wife for an hour or two or a whole day at a time if its mother has to be away from home. If a woman dies leaving young children, they are reared by her co-wives as a rule. When a girl becomes pregnant for the first time, it is one of her mother's co-wives who has the honour and duty [292] of ceremonially girding her with the matron's perineal band. Co-wives often take pride in and show great devotion to one another's children. This is especially true of a senior wife past the age of child-bearing. Such a woman, identifying herself closely with the husband and being herself no longer engrossed in her own young children, mothers the children of her younger co-wives with zealous devotion.

593 736 And yet, as the natives constantly repeat, the relation of mother and child is unique. Its mother's co-wife can never be the same to the child as its own mother. A woman cannot have the same feelings towards her co-wife's child as towards her own child. The lot of an orphan, Tallensi say, even in a household full of women, is always a hard one. An orphan never receives the devoted attention and the selfless love which can be given only by its own mother. It has to depend upon the mercy and the sense of duty of women who are its mothers only in name.

602 736 This is the reason why small children left orphans are sometimes sent to live with their maternal grandmothers until they are big enough to fend for themselves. Some months after his mother's death I met Gundaat, a pathetic little chap of about 9. Talking about various things, we got on to the subject of mothers. Gundaat told me, in a tone of

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11



593 It is useful to keep these general principles in mind in considering the details to which we must now give our attention. Putting it broadly, the relations of parents and children can be grouped in three general categories: relations of identification; of opposition or contra-identification; and of reciprocity; and the pattern in each individual case is the product of the interaction of these three categories. Our interest will lie chiefly in the structurally significant norms which give coherence and consistency to the multifarious variety of actual behaviour.

*The Importance of 'Rearing'*

181 We know that Tallensi regard the possession of offspring, particularly of sons, as the supreme purpose of life. To live long enough to see one's sons' children—to 'reach grandchildren (*paa yaas*)' as the natives say—is a gift surpassing all material wealth. Tallensi believe that it is better to die in poverty and leave children than to die childless but rich. We have seen, also, that they hold it to be the ideal of normal parenthood for physiological and social parenthood to coincide. This is more than a question of conferring social status by descent. From the native standpoint the important thing is that a child's natural parents are the right people to rear it, educate it, and control it.

861 Tallensi say that *ughug*, bringing up a child, is as vital a part of parenthood as *dɔyam*, bearing or begetting. There is a proverb, [538] 'Rearing is more important than bearing (*Ughug n-gaat dɔyam*)', often [431] quoted when they comment on the devotion of a person to a proxy or foster-parent. This is socially recognized in the obligation to give a 'cow of rearing (*ughug na'ah*)' to a foster-father out of the bride-price cattle received for a foster-daughter by her natural parent or guardian, and for a foster-son, when he returns to his natal home. It is, to be sure, only a moral obligation, but no self-respecting native would evade it. It is a recompense for the troubles the foster-father had to endure in bringing up the child. Tallensi feel strongly that it is not enough to bring a child into the world; one must also bring it up successfully, and that is the hardest part.

593 In spite of reshufflings due to widows remarrying and the instability of early marriages, the majority of Tale children grow up with their 855 natural parents. A census taken in 1934 showed that of 170 children estimated to be under 16 selected at random in one settlement, nearly 78 per cent. were living with their own parents. Approximately 20 per cent. were in the care of one natural parent and one proxy parent, and only 2 per cent. were orphans cared for by more distant kin.

593 Tallensi perceive that the social and personal relationships of a 861 particular parent with his or her children are a result very largely of 928 the way the children are brought up. They stress the influence of individual differences in personality in these relationships. There is always a personal bias in the way people interpret the accepted norms

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11



593 in illness. She is mainly responsible for their training in habits of cleanliness. She also has to teach her daughters housekeeping skills.

This formal summary is interposed here as a means of orientating our analysis. The reality, we shall find, is not so simple.

*Classificatory Parents and Own Parents*

593 Tallensi affirm that no one can wholly take the place of a person's own parents. A child may be brought up by its dead father's brother or dead mother's co-wife. Outwardly there is nothing to distinguish the relationship of such a child, during its pre-adolescent years, to its proxy parent from that of a child living with its natural parent. Men or women point with pride and affection to orphans in their custody as 'my children'. They claim to care for them as conscientiously and devotedly as for their own children. But, the natives say, there is always something lacking; and observation shows that the affective ties of proxy parent and child are much weaker than those of natural parent and child. Sometimes, indeed, there is an acknowledged emotional barrier between them.

One can see this in young children like Gundaat, whose story is told in a previous chapter (p. 130). A young child is more restrained, more formal, with a proxy parent than with a natural parent. Boys seem to be less amenable to proxy parents than to own parents, especially as they approach adulthood. When young men who have been abroad, working in Ashanti or the Colony for a period of years, are questioned about their motives for leaving home, the commonest reason they give is the death of a parent. 'My father (*ba*) died, and my junior father (*ba-pit*) took over the house (*die yir*) and so I went away', is the usual formula. One soon discovers that there was always some tension and often friction between the youth and his father's brother. The youth says that his *ba-pit* did not treat him properly; and when one questions his *ba-pit*, he usually says 'the boy did not respect (*nan*) me'. This is a modern development of what is a deeply ingrained feature of Tale social organization. A man will often continue to live and farm with his own father until the latter's death. I know men of 40 and over who are still living with their own fathers. But very rarely does this happen with a father's brother. A dead man's sons break away from the parental home when a father's brother inherits it as soon as they are able to. In such a case there is usually a convergence of different factors of segmentary differentiation in the lineage. The emotional cleavage serves as the catalyst that directs and accelerates the normal processes of splitting along economic and structural lines of cleavage.

This is the negative aspect of the idea that one's natural parents should be one's social parents, as it appears in the classificatory extension of the parent–child relationship. On the positive side it follows from this conception that all those who are socially identifiable with

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11



one's parents and play a part in one's upbringing can, and in certain circumstances must, stand to one in the relation of proxy parents. The rule applies most directly to the men and women of the same domestic unit who are identified with one's parents by generation and by social role—to one's father's brothers (*sunzop*), including his full and half-brothers and first cousins on his father's side, who are his prospective successors; and to one's mother's co-wives (*nentaas*). If these men and women all belong to the same household they are directly concerned with the production of food, the provision of shelter, and the satisfaction of the other wants of the unit upon which the physical welfare and growth of a child depends. If the men belong to relatively autonomous economic units but to the same domestic unit, they will nevertheless have a common interest in the family patrimony, to the inheritance of which they all have rights, and a common ritual dependence on the immediate ancestors of the nuclear lineage. The women will sometimes help in caring for one another's children; the men will sometimes help one another in farming and always act as a unit in ritual and jural matters under the authority of the most senior of them. And the ritual care of a child is of as much importance as its physical care. A child will not thrive (*maan*) if it is not under the spiritual wing of its patrilineal ancestors, as we have learnt.

Outside the domestic unit the terms *ba* (father) and *ma* (mother) and the distinctive modes of behaviour correlated with them, are not extended beyond the expanded family (i.e. the family cluster built up on the inner lineage) in normal circumstances. The only exception is in the case of a uterine kinsman or kinswoman of a parent, who is identified with the foundress of the uterine line and is therefore described as a 'father' or 'mother' irrespective of genealogical distance.[1]

Within the clan or maximal lineage it is a cardinal rule that generation differences are not recognized beyond the limits of the inner lineage. 'Begetting does not cross the (inner) lineage—*dɔyam pu yakɔt dug la*' is the Tale maxim. This is correlated with the structural relations of the inner lineage to lineage segments of higher order. The inner lineage is likely to be the widest segment with a common interest in patrimonial land. In relation to the clan or the maximal lineage it is usually the smallest recognized corporate segment, whose members are significant for the clan only as members of the segment. As will be remembered, it is also the unit within which sexual relations with a co-member's wife are definitely sinful. In short, the inner lineage (and the family cluster which is its residential and familial correlate) marks the limit beyond which a person takes part in corporate activities not in his own right and in his personal capacity but as a member of the

[1] Kinship terms without inverted commas stand for the primary meaning of the terms, e.g. (natural) father; those between inverted commas stand for the extended or derived meaning of the term, e.g. (classificatory) 'father'.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

## CHAPTER VI

## THE MORAL BASIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARENT AND CHILD

### *The Fundamental Axiom of Parenthood*

593 BEFORE we try to unravel further the complex strands that unite parents and children we must elucidate an idea which the Tallensi put forward as the fundamental axiom of parenthood. We have mentioned it already in our analysis of the notion of descent, but we have to examine it now from the point of view of the person-to-person relations of parents and children. It is the axiom, clearly stated by the natives and apparent also in Tale values and usages, that the fact of having begotten or borne a child creates an absolute moral bond between it and its parents. This idea is felt by them to be the real ultimate sanction behind right conduct in the relations of parents and children; and there is a very close agreement between ideals and actualities in this province of Tale social life.

593 888 ●855 Ignorance of hygiene and medicine, insufficiency of food and clothing, magical ideas, and Tale cultural standards in matters such as cleanliness or ventilation are undoubted handicaps to the child in its struggle to grow up. But sheer, callous neglect of a child by its parents, such as we sometimes hear of in more civilized societies, would be regarded with horror by all Tallensi and is unheard of. Similarly, a person who abandoned an aged parent to destitution would be regarded as a good for nothing (*boŋwari*). It happens occasionally, nowadays, when young men who find life irksome at home can so easily sneak off to foreign parts and stay away for many years. But it is a very rare thing and is universally reviled.

### *The Tribulations of Parenthood*

593 If one asks a native why parents are and should be devoted to their children; or on what grounds they claim to 'own' (*so*) their children and to be entitled to their services, affection, gratitude, and respect; if one asks a girl who is keeping sullenly indoors, because she has been forcibly recovered from the lover she eloped with and beaten into the bargain, why she submitted passively to her father; or if one asks a young man nursing a bitter grievance against a father who has stopped him from marrying the girl he was courting why he does not defy the old man; if one asks any Talɔŋ, man or woman, such questions as these the answer invariably is, 'It is *dɔŋam*'. 'Have you not begotten (or borne) them?' 'Has he not begotten you?' And then, almost always, comes the afterthought which contains the crux of the explanation, '*Dɔŋam pu tɔ?*—Is not begetting (bearing) hard?' The phrase sounds

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11



water lowered. Tallensi think it is essential for the health of the mother and babe, and one important item in it is forcing some of the decoction down the babe's throat. Whether or not it actually has a cleansing or invigorating effect must be left to medical judgement. For the native women it has the double significance of an ordeal, and a prescribed treatment that they would not dream of neglecting.

As we have seen, the care of the child on the ritual side falls on its father. The much more exacting physical care of the child in its parlous passage through infancy is its mother's responsibility. This is stressed when Tallensi insist that it is not on account of a magical taboo but because a child is still partly dependent on the breast until it is about three, that sexual intercourse between a man and his nursing wife is discontinued. They say that a child requires the undivided care of its mother until it can run about and eat solid food by itself, and that it will wilt away through lack of nourishment if she conceives prematurely. Nursing mothers become pregnant only too often through lack of self-control, but this is never condoned by public opinion. The only time a Tale woman tries to induce an abortion is when such an accident happens, for no sacrifice is too great to preserve her living child.

When Tale parents are asked what were the special difficulties they had to overcome in rearing their children, they always mention sickness first. Mothers especially have a great dread of sickness in their children. One does not notice this in the easy-going, placid atmosphere of a well-conducted family when there is no 'sleeplessness' (*gogingara*), to use the apt native euphemism for sickness. But one sees it when a child gets ill. Minor ailments throw its mother into a state of anxiety. Serious illness puts her into a panic or prostrates her with grief. She refuses food—which is always regarded by the natives as a sign of severe illness or great emotional distress—and stops all her work. I have seen illness in adolescent or adult children have this effect on women; and the younger the child the more do they suffer.

It is easy to imagine what the death of a child in infancy or childhood means to its mother. A man is expected to control his emotions, but a woman may express her grief freely. A father's grief is palliated, also, by the active role he takes in the ritual by which the emotional shock is neutralized. A woman's part in this ritual is more passive and she feels the blow more acutely in consequence. A mother remains inconsolable for many days and even weeks over the loss of a child.

The way Tallensi think of a mother's grief over the death of her child was brought home to me when Dinkaha's little girl of about three died after a lingering and horrible illness. He had been devoted to the child and was greatly distressed, but in a few days he had accepted the diviner's verdict philosophically and was his old bouncing self again. His wife, on the other hand, broke down completely. Then, a couple of weeks later, news came that an older child of hers by a former husband, with

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11



853 854 nothing else to do, her babe is at the breast, sucking hungrily or, if it is replete, just playing with the breast with its mouth, its fingers, and its toes. If the mother is away another woman of the household will give the baby medicated water to drink when it cries or will put it to her breast for comfort. It may be any woman of the family, but will usually be a co-wife.

853 862 By the age of 18 months a baby's diet is being regularly supplemented with small lumps of porridge, often pre-masticated by its mother. It is gradually and usually painlessly weaned by increasing its solid food (chiefly porridge), until it is eating the same food as the adults. The only time Tale women have to wean a baby abruptly is if they become pregnant through lack of self-control during the nursing period. Tallensi say that this distresses the baby but that harsh measures are not required as a pregnant woman's milk disgusts a baby. They also say that the premature deprivation of its mother's milk prevents the child from thriving. In fact the premature pregnancy of its mother is probably more of a psychological deprivation for the child than a nutritional loss. By the time a child has its milk teeth and is able to run about, at the age of about 3, it gets no more nourishment from the breast. But its mother's breast is still its chief solace. If it is in pain, or frightened, or just tired and peevish, it cuddles into its mother's arms and clings to her breast for consolation, and a younger baby makes this impossible.

●855 593 The completion of weaning marks the first stage in the child's physical and psychological severance from its mother. It has learnt to do without its mother for hours or days at a stretch. It remains contentedly in the care of an elder sister or other member of the household or even its maternal grandmother, as long as it is well and not hungry. It runs about and plays with other children of the homestead and neighbouring homesteads. It can talk fluently and so communicate its wishes to others. And its independence is increased when its mother becomes pregnant again and it can no longer run to the breast for comfort. Its mother is still the centre of its universe—and will remain so for two or three years more, in the case of a boy, and until marriage, for a girl—but the toddler has begun to glimpse the wider social space into which it is growing. Since it began to crawl it has often been told to 'go to your mother (own mother)', 'go to your mother so-and-so (mother's co-wife)', 'go to your grandfather (or grandmother)', 'go to your father (own father)', 'go to your father so-and-so (father's brother)', 'go to Yin, Tee, Baa (a sibling)' by one or other member of the family. Thus it has learnt to divide the people who come into its social space into 'own mother', 'own father', 'other mothers and other fathers' (who take care of it now and then), and 'other children', those whom it plays with, or eats with, or sees about the house. Own parents stand out clearly to the infant—its mother for obvious reasons, its father, as one man put it, 'because she (his little daughter) is often told and because she sleeps with her mother and sees

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11



me in her mother's room'. The other categories are blurred; any adult of the domestic group is described as a 'mother' or 'father'.

During these first three or four years a child's father, though he sees less of it than its mother does, is as loving and indulgent a parent. A baby can do no wrong; for, as Tallensi say, 'it has no sense (*u ka yam*)'. I have seen an infant screaming in a tantrum or nagging tiresomely at its mother while she was too busy with a household task, such as cooking, to attend to it, and its father come in and carry it off to soothe it. What discipline or frustration of impulse a child encounters in this period comes mainly from its mother or a young nursemaid. For example until it can drink by itself, an infant is regularly given a drink (*yuh*, causative from *yu*, to drink), at least once daily, usually when it is bathed. This is an item of hygiene with a quasi-magical stamp. The fluid may be plain water, unboiled or previously boiled and cooled down; or it may be a decoction of roots (*yaya*), the generic term for any vegetable products used in Tale leechcraft and medicine. Its composition is prescribed by the child's spirit guardian (*sɛyər*). After its bath the mother lays the child on her lap facing sideways, holds her cupped hand to its mouth, and pours the drink from a small calabash into the babe's mouth. It splutters and chokes, kicks and screams with rage, but the liquid is poured down its throat relentlessly.

Until they can run about by themselves Tale children are not expected to be house-clean. By the age of 3, however, most of them have learnt to run outside to defecate during the day and to ask to be taken outside in the night. They are still apt to micturate indoors wherever they may happen to be. Tallensi do not inculcate clean habits by direct training or by punishing faults in a child. A child acquires cleanliness by a gradual process of habituation[1] and social maturation as its general self-control, its powers of locomotion and of speech, and its identifications with adults grow. But if a small child, already accustomed to run outside, has an accident indoors, it is likely to be rebuked by one of the adults, most probably its mother or an older sibling.

It is also the mother who stands for the most serious deprivation the child experiences up to the age of weaning, the loss of the breast. There is nothing in their folk-lore or customs suggesting that the Tallensi have anything but the most matter-of-fact attitude towards the female breast. I have seen a man, with that utter lack of squeamishness characteristic of most Tallensi, when treating his brother's wife for inability to nurse her baby, himself suck at her breast in order to test the flow of milk. But there is a custom which hints that the mother's breast is felt to be a special symbol of motherhood. If a woman is very grievously affronted by her grown-up son or daughter, and she takes hold of her breast and says, 'I suffered to bear you and this is how you treat me

[1] Described in my *Social and Psychological Aspects of Education in Taleland* as a response to the expectation of normal behaviour.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11



593 554 covers almost every standard social relationship of siblings in Tale society. Siblings are laterally identified with one another, so to speak; brothers can replace one another in the social structure in a way that gives rise to a minimum of readjustment in the social relations of any other people affected. This contrasts with the vertical identification of parent and child, which rests on the continuity of the descent line not on actual or potential identity of social roles. This is a generalized formula. It leaves out of account a very important item, the effect of the sexual dichotomy of Tale culture. The distinctive social roles imposed on men and women by this factor restrict the identification of brother and sister to a narrow sphere, and the functions of women limit the social equivalence of sisters to their relationship with each other's children.

593 955 577 In infancy and childhood the equivalence of siblings is of little consequence. It comes out chiefly in the rule that parents should not discriminate between their children (proxy children as well as own children). Tallensi say that, in practice, one cannot help preferring one son to another or one daughter to another. One child may be more obedient or industrious or better tempered than his brothers and sisters, so one will be inclined to favour him; and there is the admitted bias in favour of younger children, especially the youngest, as we have seen. Moreover, proxy children are rarely as dear to the heart of a parent as own children are. Even a mother, whose love for all her children (except the youngest) is proverbially without bias, sometimes has favourites among them. There is plenty of evidence for these admissions. The Chief of Tongo had well over two-score children; among them his favourites were a son and a daughter of about 18, born soon after he was appointed chief. Nor do such preferences stop with childhood. Tiezien reposed his trust in his late brother's two sons, who had grown up in his care. The only son he had of his own who was old enough to assist him in public affairs was, he said good humouredly, too stupid.

But, say the Tallensi, this is a matter of *feelings*—what 'your heart desires (*i suh mboot*)'. When it is a matter of *rights*, to discriminate between children is bad, almost sinful; it is like rejecting one child for the sake of another. It would be regarded as iniquitous for a man to let some of his children go hungry while others were well fed. With two adult sons, as we have seen, it is considered right for both of them to be assisted to marry before either is allowed to have two wives. It is the same with other things in which there is an element of right or duty; and the majority of natives are very conscientious in this matter, at least as far as their own children are concerned. Nowadays, in particular, as has often been emphasized to me, if a man has two sons and does not deal with them equally, the one who feels himself unjustly treated soon finds an opportunity for running away to seek work abroad. Sensible parents follow this rule conscientiously even in trivial matters. Omara

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11



had two little daughters, aged about 3, by different wives. One day the two children appeared very proudly each wearing a strip of cotton print about the waist. Omara explained that he had bought them these 'skirts', which had to be exactly the same in size and pattern. Had they been different in colour or size, or had he bought the children different presents, they would have been very upset and their mothers angry. He would have been accused of discriminating between them.

As this instance suggests, the closer children are in age or parentage or both the more should they be treated alike. The limiting case is that of twins and this deserves a special note. Twins (*leeba*)[1] are not greeted with joy among the Tallensi; but they are not destroyed; nor are they regarded as sacred in any circumstances; nor is the mother subject to moral censure or ritual penalties. But no woman desires to bear twins. One of the most efficacious medicines that can be placed in a ground-nut plot or among *ma'ana* (*Hibiscus esculentus*), *bet* (*H. sabdariffa*), or *beris* (*H. cannabinus*) plants—all of which supply favourite ingredients for sauces[2]—to prevent women from pilfering these crops is the medicine of twins (*leeba teem*) used in purifying the parents of twins. Anyone who defies this charm will have twins, it is said. I have seen women run on catching sight unexpectedly of a twin medicine charm dangling in a farm.

Tallensi believe that twins may not be 'human (*ninvoo*)'—i.e. complete social beings—at birth. As soon as they are born, a man who owns twin medicine is asked for medicine to mark their sleeping-place. If one or both die shortly after birth that is proof positive that he or they are *kɔlkpaaris*, malicious bush sprites, not human beings. They are then buried ignominiously in a special uninhabited place. A twin that survives the first month or so of life is tacitly assumed to be human and treated as an ordinary child. But if it dies in early infancy it may still prove to have been a *kɔlkpaarəg*, when the cause of its death is sought by divination. Its death will cause great distress to its parents, for it will have been treated with as much affection and devotion as a normal child, but it will not receive normal burial. Only when it reaches the age of about 4 [i.e. is old enough to have a following sibling (*nyeer*)] and is placed under the spiritual guardianship of an ancestor spirit, is a twin definitely regarded as a complete social being.

Tallensi seem to expect, as a matter of course, that at least one of a pair of twins will die in very early infancy.[3] The survivor then has to be

[1] They are always named *Yin* (Heaven) for the older and *Zuur* (tail) for the younger—*Yin*, 'because he sees the light of day first'; *Zuur* 'because he comes last'.

[2] *Vide* previously cited paper 'Food in the Domestic Economy of the Tallensi', by M. and S. L. Fortes.

[3] I can state with absolute certainty that every effort is made to keep twins alive. But the natives assert that the sheer physical strain of nursing and caring for twins is too much for most women. This is highly probable considering that

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11



827 *Naawum*, Heaven, the *ultima ratio* of Tale philosophy, corresponding
881 in this context to our notion of Nature.

812 In keeping with this conception of physical growth, children are *expected* to acquire, in due course, the elementary bodily skills—sitting,
868 crawling, walking, running, hand-eye-mouth co-ordination in eating,
● 855 and so forth. There is no deliberate training in these skills. Parents
856 and older siblings take an affectionate and attentive, though sporadic, interest in an infant's psycho-physical development, but do not resort to special methods of fostering it. An infant beginning to crawl is allowed to practise more or less at will, watched by mother or sister, brother or father, lest it injure itself. An infant beginning to walk is supported for a bit, now and then, by an older child, or a parent, or any one to whose care it happens to be entrusted. There is no such thing as regular training in these skills. The attention given to an infant in these respects is a function not only of its stage of physiological development, but even more so of the practical exigencies of the situation with which the parent or older child has to cope at the moment. It is quite usual to see incidents such as this: a woman is
[313] gathering guinea corn-stalks for her fire some 20–30 yards from the homestead. Her infant son of about 2½ years totters along the path to her calling out *mma*, *mma* (my mother). She appears to take no
[516] notice until he reaches her. He stands beside her, clutching her thigh tightly, while she finishes tying the bundle of guinea corn-stalks. She
[482] puts the bundle on her head and, as she wants to get back into the house as quickly as possible, swings the infant—by one arm—up to her hip and marches off. If she were not in a hurry she might walk back slowly, allowing the infant to follow her and throwing back encouraging remarks to him.

868 Since nobody thinks infants need special training by particular
854 persons, the natives have a habit of bandying them about from one member of a family to another, though grandparents, co-wives, and other children of the same mother are the most usual nursemaids. A Tale child must, from earliest infancy, learn to co-operate to its fullest capacity with the demands of practical necessity: it must learn to adapt itself to such facts of reality as the economic preoccupations of its mother. I have often seen children of about 12–18 months left sitting in the shade for half an hour or longer, quite alone, while their

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11



867 857 somnolent, sat whimpering as he ate, while some one else commented that if you want your share of food you must be there to receive it.

183 764 The principle of reciprocity which is thus early learnt in association with siblings and age mates is one of the basic moral axioms of Tale social life. If a man refuses to come to the assistance of a neighbour who has invited a collective hoeing party, the latter will retaliate by refusing assistance to the former at a later date. Often at mortuary ceremonies some one, not obliged by custom to do so, will bring an animal to be slaughtered for the dead, 'because when my father died, he brought a sheep to be killed'. A girl of about 10, after her grandmother's funeral, showed me how half her head had been shaved in the customary way. But her spontaneous explanation was: 'Because, at the feast, when they cook the beans they give me a whole dish to myself.' This moral aspect of Tale social relations, as we can now see, explains the rights which increasing economic skill confer upon a boy or a girl. Those who work for you *deserve* their keep.[1]

[854 855] [966] [839]

[1] I have not attempted to track the Tale attitudes towards authority and justice to their roots in infant psychology, as would be necessary for an exhaustive analysis. Some of the phenomena which should be observed in this connexion are not accessible to study by the behaviouristic methods of the field worker. But it may be worth mentioning that one can readily observe the constraint and force which, at some times, the affection and indulgence which, at others, are expressed in the way parents treat their infant children. From the day of its birth an infant is subjected to the agonizing ordeal of a daily bath in steaming medicated water which is so hot that it becomes rigid with pain on the first douche. One sees infants of a few days to about 12 months old arbitrarily held down on their mother's laps while medicated drinking water is forcibly poured down their throats as they struggle and splutter. A few minutes after an infant has been treated thus roughly it will be lovingly suckled, fondled, and caressed by mother or sister, or affectionately dandled by its father. A 3-year-old suddenly frightened runs to its father, or more characteristically to its mother to bury its face between her knees, clutching her thighs, or to snatch at the breast. The same 3-year-old, in a fit of temper, will nag, whimper petulantly, strike its mother with its little fists. No one beats an infant for this. The mother tries to soothe it, or patiently calls some one—husband or co-wife—to come and take charge of the unruly child. This indulgence extends to the excretory processes, and to masturbation, which is overt until puberty in boys. Until it is weaned, at about 3—when it can walk—it has very complete possession of its mother. After weaning, which is generally mild, the child becomes more detached from its mother, who now resumes regular intercourse with her husband. At this age, or even younger, children are often playfully threatened by their fathers. 'I will slaughter you if you do so and so', but they always seem to react with complete equanimity to this. Yet a boy of 4–5 years, suspiciously

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11



Like ourselves, the Tallensi recognize that some observances are merely matters of convention, others are matters of conscience, and a great many have elements of both. Their emphasis, however, differs conspicuously from ours. For example, the notion of cruelty to animals as delinquent or reprehensible would never occur to them. Small boys often catch mice or birds and keep them, tied with a strip of strong grass, to play with for days and eventually kill and eat them. It is, indeed, a crude form of nature study, for they learn a great deal about the habits, the anatomy, and physiology of the animals and birds they ostensibly maltreat in this way. They are never checked, and the suggestion that this was bad (the Tallensi have no expression, as far as I am aware, for our notion of cruelty) was received with amused laughter. It is a natural interest of children and not a moral problem; and it does not produce a general attitude of cruelty to animals. Both children and adults often show great affection for domestic dogs, for example.

Many rules of conduct are observed 'because it is befitting' (*de narəmi*)—or because non-conformity is 'unbecoming' (*de pu narəmi*)—i.e. it rouses embarrassment or ridicule or public criticism. Thus when greeting a superior, a man must sit with legs flat, crossed at the calves, bare-headed, eyes lowered, whereas a woman must crouch on all fours or sit with thighs close together and legs tucked under the buttocks. This latter posture in women is a matter of modesty. Up to about 9 or 10 years of age a little girl can sit in any way, legs spread out if she wishes, although from babyhood she has learnt to sit with legs tucked under. As she approaches puberty she will often be admonished 'sit properly' if she does not sit decorously. It is unbecoming for women to eat the domestic fowl, and I have often heard little girls of 9 or 10 boast that they are already refraining from it. A woman goes naked until she is advanced in her first pregnancy.

eyeing me from the security of his mother's lap, was heard to say that he was afraid I might cut off his penis. The Tale infant, in short, appears to be permitted to gratify all its wish impulses without restraint; yet it must do so in a social world over which it has no control, in which it is a weak dependant. Here, I think, still speaking in terms of superficial psychology, is the germ of the later domination of respect for authority in the child's moral development. It seems probable, from these observations, that the deeper psychology of the process is not unlike that which has been recorded by students of our own children, such as Dr. S. Isaacs.